

Georgia

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2009 SEP 28 AM 9:04

From: Cathy Noh [mailto:cathy.noh@saylorcompany.com]
Sent: Thursday, September 24, 2009 6:37 AM
Subject: Statement from Abkhaz President Sergei Bagapsh in Advance of President Saakashvili's UNGA Speech
Importance: High

Please consider the attached statement from Abkhaz President Sergei Bagapsh in any of your coverage of Georgian President Saakashvili's UNGA speech.

We also include an article from Der Spiegel, dealing with the upcoming report from the special EU commission charged with investigating the 2008 war in South Ossetia. We've seen other media reports that indicate the report will be released on 30 September. We will likely have some reaction from South Ossetia and from Abkhazia for you on this important document.

In addition, we attach a fact sheet on the refugee situation in Abkhazia for your reference. President Saakashvili will probably refer to refugees in his speech.

Best regards,

Steve Ellis
Saylor Company
202-715-1448

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September 24, 2009



**Statement from Abkhaz President Sergei Bagapsh in
Advance of President Saakashvili's UNGA Speech**

President Saakashvili is one of the most dangerous leaders in the world. He has convinced his allies that he supports democracy, yet his own people know that he jails critics and crushes dissent. He speaks of peace, yet he triggers war. His brutal attack on the civilians of South Ossetia in 2008 and his refusal to take responsibility for the unnecessary deaths and widespread damage that resulted is a tragic reminder of his dangerous behavior. His recent confiscation of ships delivering peaceful goods to Abkhazia is yet another example of his reckless decision-making.

I understand the United Nations must provide a forum for world leaders, even those who have consistently displayed an inability to tell the truth. But for the U.N. to debate the future of the Abkhazian and Ossetian people without even hearing their voices is unconscionable and smacks of an era when colonial powers unilaterally determined the fate of smaller nations.

If the United Nations is serious about promoting peace in the Caucasus, then it will use its influence to persuade President Saakashvili to renounce violence against his neighbors and to participate in an honest dialogue about a peaceful way forward.

Abkhazians have welcomed back tens of thousands of refugees to the Gal region and have established policies to ensure their safe return and resettlement. We are moving forward to build our nation's future and secure our position as responsible and productive members of the international community.

-- Sergei Bagapsh, President, Republic of Abkhazia

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EU Report - Independent Experts Blame Georgia for South Ossetia War Der Spiegel, September 21 2009, 345 words

An EU expert commission has put the blame for last summer's South Ossetia war on Georgia, but also holds Russia partly responsible, SPIEGEL has learned. The findings, which are still under wraps, are likely to reignite the debate on the causes of the war when they are published.

The independent commission appointed by the European Union to investigate the war between Georgia and Russia last summer has concluded that Tbilisi is responsible for causing the five-day conflict, SPIEGEL has learned.

According to diplomats in Brussels who are familiar with the contents of the secret document, the EU experts also assign part of the responsibility for the war to Russia, however. The report, which stems from an initiative by German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and his colleagues from the Benelux countries, concludes that Moscow escalated the conflict through its massive deployment of troops.

The international commission, which is headed by Heidi Tagliavini, wants to keep its findings under wraps until next week because the Swiss diplomat first wants to present the controversial results to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in New York. After that, the ambassadors of the 27 EU member states in Brussels and the Georgian and Russian governments will be simultaneously informed of the commission's findings.

The publication of the report is set to spark renewed debate about who is responsible for the war. Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili has already complained that "some idiots say we started the war." Tbilisi is mainly afraid that the report will reduce the chances of Georgia being allowed to join NATO within the near future.

The conflict broke out on Aug. 7, 2008 when Georgia attacked the breakaway region of South Ossetia. Russian forces quickly repelled the Georgian attack and advanced into Georgia. Hundreds of people, including many civilians, are believed to have died during the fighting before a ceasefire was agreed upon on Aug. 12.

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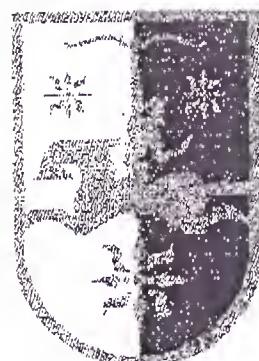
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September 2009



FACT SHEET ON THE REPUBLIC OF ABKHAZIA'S
REFUGEE PROGRAM

Since the 1992-93 Abkhazian Georgian war, more than 60,000 refugees have been successfully resettled in Abkhazia, which represents the largest peaceful resettlement program in modern times. This has occurred in spite of an ongoing campaign by the Georgian government to politicize the refugee process by provoking ethnic tensions, creating impediments to the safe return of refugees and establishing legal and diplomatic barriers to an international resolution.

The following points are designed to provide background on the refugee situation in Abkhazia.

- WHY HAVE SO MANY PEOPLE FLED ABKHAZIA?
During the 1992-93 war, Georgian troops launched a massive attack on the civilian population of Abkhazia, destroying schools, hospitals, cultural relics and government buildings. This attack, which was aimed at annihilating the Abkhazian population and bringing the territory firmly under Georgian control, caused a massive exodus. More than 500 villages were destroyed. Though the Abkhazians successfully fought off Georgian attackers, the conflict did not end. In the decades following, Georgia repeatedly tried to destabilize Abkhazia, launching military incursions in 1998, 2001 and August 2006. Each conflict triggered another outflow of refugees.
- HOW MANY REFUGEES HAVE BEEN FORCED TO LEAVE ABKHAZIA?
Since the 1992-93 war, an estimated 190,000 refugees have left Abkhazia. They included Abkhazians, Georgians, Mingrelians, Greeks, Jews and Russians.
- HOW MANY REFUGEES HAVE RETURNED?
The largest concentration of Georgians within Abkhazia was in the Gal region. Since the war, more than 52,000 refugees have returned to Gal. In addition, at least 15,000 Georgians have returned to other regions of Abkhazia. Claims by the Georgian government that there are more than 500,000 refugees still displaced from their homes are absurd.
- WHAT RIGHTS DO GEORGIAN RETURNEES HAVE?

Under Abkhazian law, citizens are treated equally regardless of race, nationality, sex or religion.

- **DO RESIDENTS OF GAL HAVE ANY SPECIAL RIGHTS?**

To assist the residents of Gal in their resettlement, the government of Abkhazia has provided them with some special privileges. They include an exemption from compulsory military service, free emergency medical care, Georgian-language schools, scholarships for higher education and small business assistance.

- **ARE GEORGIANS FORCED TO TAKE ABKHAZIAN PASSPORTS TO LIVE IN ABKHAZIA?**

The identity documents valid for residency in Abkhazia include the following: passports from Abkhazia or the Russia Federation or an identity document known as Form 9. An identity document is required to hold a job, purchase real estate, enroll children in school and receive medical care. According to the Gal administration, 1,642 Georgian residents of Gal have applied for and received Abkhazian passports. Reports that Georgians have been forced to take Abkhazian passports are untrue.

- **WHY HAS THE ABKHAZIAN GOVERNMENT REFUSED TO ALLOW GEORGIAN REFUGEES BACK TO THEIR HOMES IN EASTERN ABKHAZIA?**

The Abkhazian government has not prevented refugees from returning, and to the contrary, has overseen the largest peaceful resettlement of refugees in history. However, to ensure the safety and economic security of its population, the Abkhazian government insists that certain preconditions be met before it opens its door to thousands of additional people. Those conditions include a Georgian pledge of non-violence and an independent assessment of the current refugee situation in Abkhazia, including a full accounting of all refugees resettled to date.

- **ARE THERE ANY REFUGEES WHO HAVE NOT BEEN ALLOWED TO RETURN?**

The Abkhazian government maintains the right to prosecute any citizens who have participated in subversive activities, such as armed attacks or kidnappings. The government has a list of people accused of those activities and they will be arrested and prosecuted if they return to Abkhazian territory. Since August 2008, five people have been killed and more than 10 injured as a result of terrorist attacks involving Georgians.

- **HOW HAS THE GEORGIAN GOVERNMENT IMPEDED THE SUCCESSFUL RESOLUTION OF THE REFUGEE PROBLEM?**

To begin with, Georgia's government is responsible for creating the refugee problem by its repeated and unsuccessful efforts to retake its former territories in Abkhazia and South Ossetia by force. Georgia's leaders have attempted to sabotage the resettlement process by supporting subversive activities inside Gal and harassing and intimidating Georgians who have chosen to return to Abkhazia. Georgia has also demanded that international groups freeze economic development and social programs in Abkhazia and South Ossetia or risk prosecution under Georgian law. Georgia adopted a law that makes it a crime for

representatives of international organizations to enter Abkhazia and South Ossetia. These laws have forced international groups to make a choice between working in Abkhazia or Georgia. Finally, economic sanctions imposed by Georgia, and supported by its Western backers, have made it difficult for Abkhazia to obtain the necessary funding needed to implement a successful refugee resettlement program.